

Mini-Manual
for
Using
MLA Style
in
Research Papers

MLA Mini-Manual

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About the MLA Handbook

The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers describes a set of conventions that govern the written presentation of research. These guidelines follow current practices as recommended by the Modern Language Association of America (a professional organization of some 25,000 instructors of English and other languages). These conventions are used primarily in the humanities.

Joseph Gibaldi's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers provides the researcher with a streamlined and easily referenced guide to the MLA format.

Copies of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers can be purchased in the Wright State University Bookstore.

References in this mini-manual such as (MLA 4.5.4) reflect sections in the MLA handbook where more information on that subject may be found.

For Further Reference:

Gibaldi, Joseph, ed. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.

5th ed. New York: MLA, 1999.

Walker, Janice L. and Todd Taylor. "Basic CGOS Style." Columbia Guide to Online Style. New York: Columbia UP, 1998. 3 Nov.

1999. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/cgos/idx_basic.html>.

Format and Layout (MLA 3.1-3.6) (See sample pages for examples)

Typing, Printing, Font: Do not use script or other fancy print ("Courier" and "Times" are usually good choices). A letter-quality printer is preferable to a dot-matrix printer. When using a computer to write a paper, be sure to justify only on the left margin. Full justification is incorrect in an MLA document. Type or print only on one side of the paper.

Paper: Use white, twenty-pound, 8-1/2 x 11-inch paper.

Margins: Use one-inch margins on all sides.

Spacing: Double-space EVERYTHING, including block quotations.

Pagination: Your last name and the page number should appear in the upper right-hand corner of each page, one-half inch from the top, beginning with the first page. Number all pages consecutively, including Works Cited pages.

Paragraph Indentations: Indent each paragraph five spaces or one-half inch. Indent block quotations of one paragraph or less ten spaces from the left margin. For a block quotation of two or more paragraphs, indent the first line of each new paragraph an additional three spaces.

Heading and Title: An MLA research paper DOES NOT REQUIRE A TITLE PAGE. On the first page, one inch from the top and flush with the left margin, type your name(double-space), your instructor's name(double-space), the unabbreviated course title and number(double-space), and the date. Dates appear without punctuation before or after, as follows: 22 June 1996.

Double-space and then type your title, centered. Capitalize all significant words in the title. **Do not underline the title, or put it in quotes, or put it all in capitals.** Do not use a period after headings. Following the title, double-space, indent, and begin the text.

If your title includes the title of a published book, underline ONLY the title of the published book (ex: A Review of Burgess's A Clockwork Orange). If your title includes the title of a published article, put quotes ONLY around the article title (ex: Two Views of Brock's "The Value of Human Life").

Documenting Sources (MLA 4.1)

All information in a paper that comes from another source must be documented to indicate its origin. This includes quotes, paraphrased information, and summaries. There are two parts to documenting sources: citations within the text of the paper and a list entitled "Works Cited" that follows the paper. Each in-text citation must have a corresponding entry on the Works Cited list.

Parenthetical Documentation (In-text Citations) (MLA 5.1-5.2)

In-text citations appear with borrowed information in your text and include only the author's last name and the page number(s) on which the information appears. Note that there is no comma between the author's name and the page number. Periods always go AFTER a parenthetical citation, except with a block quote (see p.6).

Writing should remain "each student's own" (Fulwiler 190).

A citation with two or three authors:

(Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred 340).

Four or more authors:

(Belanoff et al. 132).

Page numbers only in citations: (MLA 5.3)

When the same author is cited two or more times in a row and the reference is clear, you may include only the page number(s) in the parentheses in subsequent citations:

Also important is the fact that "at another level, sentence combining may have a more direct effect on the language student" (67-68).

You may also do this if the author is introduced in the text:

Sanborn notes that the students "cannot combine the sentences without knowing what the words mean" (66).

Other in-text citations: (MLA 5.4.4-5.4.5)

- 1) Citation information presented in the text of your essay need not be included in parenthetical documentation. This method can be especially helpful when citing electronic resources such as the Internet. See "Using introductions" (next page) for an example.
- 2) If no page number is available, use only the author's name:
(Puente)
- 3) Use a corporate name as you would an author's:
(Smithsonian Institution 12)
- 4) If no author is listed, use a shortened version of the title:
("Writing")

Quotations (MLA 2.7)

Quotations must reproduce the borrowed text exactly. You may quote entire sentences or any part of a sentence. If you quote only part of a sentence, you must supply additional text to complete the sentence smoothly and grammatically.

While the results are not conclusive, it's possible that the writing assignments "may have been of indirect benefit by acting as catalysts in the language acquisition process" (Sanborn 60).

Quoted text may come at any place in the sentence, and it may be divided by your own words: (MLA 2.7.2)

- 1) "The language acquisition process" is of most direct benefit to the writers (Sanborn 60).
- 2) The exercises, which "may have been of indirect benefit," are most important because they may act as "catalysts in the language acquisition process" of the student writers (Sanborn 60).

Using introductions to add authority:

It's often best to introduce your quote or set up the source as an authority who has knowledge in the field, rather than simply quoting entire sentences:

Jean Sanborn, an English professor and director of the Writing Center at Colby College, notes that "at many colleges, advanced English as a Second Language students enroll in regular basic writing courses" (60).

Block Quotations (MLA 2.7.2)

For a quote of more than four typed lines, use a block quotation. Begin a new line, indent each quoted line one inch (ten spaces) from the left margin, do not use quotation marks, and put the period **before** the parenthetical citation. A colon sometimes introduces this type of quotation.

Combining sentences requires much the same process as learning language:

The combining involves moving from deep structures through various transformations to different surface structures, which, though much oversimplified, is similar to the way in which we construct our first language. (Sanborn 67)

Altering Quoted Material (MLA 2.7.5-2.7.6)

Place text added within a quote in square brackets; omit words in a quote with an ellipsis. Note that in an ellipsis the periods are enclosed in square brackets.

The assumption is that eventually "students [in the school system] are expected to [. . .] apply those skills successfully across the curriculum" (Montague 83).

Quoting Indirect Sources (MLA 5.4.7)

It's best to use the original (primary) source when possible; however, you can cite a source that is quoted elsewhere by including "qtd. in" before the author's name in the parentheses:

The new material is "nonbiodegradable and difficult to recycle" (qtd. in Fulwiler 195).

A final word on using quotations:

Quotes are best used selectively and kept brief. Quote materials that are particularly revealing, insightful, or supportive, and paraphrase or summarize the rest. Overuse of quotes shows little original thought or skill as a writer.

Paraphrasing

A paraphrase uses information gained from another source and must be documented the same way as quoted material. However, to paraphrase, you recast the information in your own words. You must be careful not to rely too heavily upon the words, sentence structure, or phrasing of the original passage and at the same time accurately represent what the author has said. Paraphrases generally convey most of the original information and are about the same length as the original.

The writing assignments may have indirectly helped the students acquire new language (Sanborn 60).

Summarizing

Summary is much the same as paraphrased information, but it usually condenses information from a longer segment--a paragraph, page, chapter, or even an entire book. In this case, only the most important points are conveyed, again remaining true to the intent of the original author.

Jean Sanborn's experiences as an advanced instructor ESL led her to conclude that there are advantages to using sentence combining exercises, which seem to improve students' writing and their attitudes about learning English (60).

Works Cited in the MLA Format (MLA 4.3)

References cited in your paper in parenthetical documentation must appear on the **Works Cited** page at the end of the paper. The Works Cited page is an alphabetical list of all sources cited in your paper. As its name indicates, **a Works Cited page includes ONLY works actually included in citations in the paper.**

Works Cited Page Format: (MLA 4.4) (See sample pages)

A **Works Cited** page begins on a new page following the text. The same rules for margins, spacing, and page numbering apply. EVERYTHING is double-spaced, and the page numbering continues. Entries appear in alphabetical order by authors' last names. Center the title (Works Cited) at the top of the page and start each entry at the left margin. Indent all additional lines of a single entry five spaces (one-half inch), and begin new entries at the left margin. Use as many pages as are necessary.

The Basic Format: (MLA 4.6.1)

An entry in a list of works cited characteristically has three main divisions--author, title, and publication information--each followed by a period. The basic format:

Last name, First name. Title. City: Publisher, Year.

General Guidelines:

The following information, when applicable, should be included in order as follows:

1. Author's name
2. Title of a part of the book
3. Title of the book
4. Name of the editor, translator, or compiler
5. Edition used
6. Number(s) of the volume(s) used
7. Name of the series
8. Place of publication, name of the publisher, and date of publication
9. Page numbers
10. Supplementary bibliographic information and annotation

Author's name:

List the author's name as it appears on the title page of the publication. Use reverse order for alphabetizing: Smith, John J.

Never abbreviate the name, but use initials if they are used as the author's name in the source. Suffixes or roman numerals that are an essential part of the name are kept, with a comma preceding (e.g., Rockefeller, John D., IV).

In general, exclude affiliations and degrees, such as Dr., Ph.D., Lady, or Sir, that precede or follow names.

Titles:

Capitalize the title as you normally would, put a colon between main titles and subtitles, and underline the entire title.

Edition used: (MLA 4.6.14)

Books that have been published beyond a first edition usually indicate such information on the title page. Follow the format found there to note the edition you consulted (e.g. 2nd ed., 3rd ed., 1992 ed., Rev. ed. for "Revised edition").

Number(s) of the volume(s) used: (MLA 4.6.15)

If material has been drawn from only one volume of a multi-volume work, give that volume number only (Vol. 3). If more than one volume has been used, give the work's complete number of volumes (4 vols.).

Publication data: (MLA 4.6.1)

List the city of publication (colon), the publisher's name (comma), and the year of publication. Abbreviate the name of the country for cities outside the United States, or the province name for Canadian cities. List only the first city given, even if several are listed.

Use the publisher's surname (Knopf for Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.) or the first surname of a partnership (Dodd for Dodd, Mead, and Co.).

If no date is given on the book's title page, use the latest copyright date on the copyright page.

SAMPLE WORKS CITED ENTRIES

BOOKS

A book with a single author: (MLA 4.6.1)

Montague, Marjorie. Computers, Cognition, and Writing Instruction. Albany: State U of New York P, 1990.

A book with two or three authors: (MLA 4.6.4)

Oliu, Walter E., Charles T. Brusaw, and Gerald J. Alred. Writing That Works: How to Write Effectively on the Job. 2nd. ed. New York: St. Martin's, 1984.

A book with four or more authors: (MLA 4.6.4)

Belanoff, Pat, et al. The Right Handbook. Upper Montclair: Boynton/Cook, 1986.

An edited book: (MLA 4.6.2)

Cavitch, David, ed. Life Studies: A Thematic Reader. New York: St. Martin's, 1983.

A book by a corporate author: (MLA 4.6.6)

American Psychological Association. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 4th. ed. Washington: APA, 1994.

An article or essay in an anthology: (MLA 4.6.7)

Gould, Stephen Jay. "Counters and Cable Cars." The Best American Essays: College Edition. Ed. Robert Atwan. Boston: Houghton, 1995. 374-83.

An edition: (MLA 4.6.12)

Williams, Joseph M. Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity & Grace. 2nd. ed. Glenview: Scott, Foresman, 1985.

A translation: (MLA 4.6.13)

Lukacs, Georg. The Historical Novel. Trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell. London: Merlin, 1962.

An introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword: (MLA 4.6.9)

Galbraith, John Kenneth. Introduction. Recollections of the New Deal: When People Mattered. By Thomas H. Eliot. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1992. ix-xv.

PERIODICALS

An article in a magazine: (MLA 4.7.6)

Carroll, James. "An American Requiem." The Atlantic Monthly Apr. 1996: 76-88.

An article in a journal with continuous pagination: (MLA 4.7.1)

Fulwiler, Toby. "Provocative Revision." The Writing Center Journal 12 (1996): 190-204.

An article in a journal with separate pagination: (MLA 4.7.2)

Sanborn, Jean. "Obstacles and Opportunities: Sentence Combining in Advanced ESL." Journal of Basic Writing 6.2 (1987): 60-71.

An article from a newspaper: (MLA 4.7.5)

Jackson, Maggie. "Dow Flirts with 7500: Tech Shares Strong." The Washington Post 10 June 1997: C2.

EDITORIALS

An editorial: (MLA 4.7.10)

Miller, Arthur R. "Open Records Can Violate Privacy." Editorial. Los Angeles Times 29 Aug. 1999: A5.

Letters to the editor: (MLA 4.7.11)

Brizal, Paul G., Jr. Letter. Time 11 Oct. 1999: 7.

Rose, Emanuel. Letter. Chicago Tribune 23 Sept. 1999,
sec. 1: 12.

Note that the format of newspaper page numbers differs according to whether sections of the paper are numbered or lettered.

INTERVIEWS

A published interview: (MLA 4.8.7)

Theroux, Paul. Interview. Conversations with American Writers. By Charles Raus. New York: Knopf, 1985. 244-264.

An interview that you conducted in person: (MLA 4.8.7)

Johnson, Charles. Personal interview. 23 July 1997.

A telephone interview: (MLA 4.8.7)

Johnson, Charles. Telephone interview. 27 July 1997.

REVIEWS

A book review: (MLA 4.7.7)

Walter, Natasha. "Newfoundland Kisses." Rev. of The Shipping News, by E. Annie Proulx. The Times Literary Supplement 26 Nov. 1993: 22.

A movie review: (MLA 4.7.7)

Alder, Jerry. "'Tis a Gift to be Simple." Rev. of Forrest Gump. Newsweek 1 Aug. 1994: 58-59.

MISCELLANEOUS

A film: (MLA 4.8.3)

Hamlet. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. Columbia/Tristar, 1996.

A dissertation: (MLA 4.6.26-4.6.27)

Morris, Jonathan Ira. "Analysis of Protein Disulfide Isomerase Using cDNA Clones." Diss. Wright State U, 1989.

Basic Format for Electronic Resources (MLA 4.9)

Electronic sources require much the same documentation information as other resources, with the addition of any of the following that apply. Omit items that are unavailable.

Deciding who is the author, publisher, and even what the title is can sometimes be difficult for electronic sources. Look for an author or publishing organization if at all possible. If a title is not readily apparent, use the most obvious choice, such as a heading, name of the link you followed, or the title in your browser window.

For scholarly projects and information databases, include these elements in the entry:

1. Title of the project or database (underlined)
2. Name of the editor of the project or database
3. Electronic publication information, including version number, date of publication or last update, and name of sponsoring institution or organization
4. Date of access
5. Network address (URL) in angle brackets

A scholarly project or information database: (MLA 4.9.2a)

ABC News. 20 Oct. 1999. ABC News Internet Ventures. 20 Oct. 1999. <<http://abcnews.go.com/>>.

To cite a specific document within a scholarly project or information database or a personal or professional site, include the following elements (if provided):

1. Author's name
2. The words "Home Page" (if the site is a home page but this information is not evident in the name of site)
3. Title of the document
4. Name of the site
5. Date of publication
6. Name of the sponsoring company or institution
7. Date when you looked at the information
8. The network address (URL) in angle brackets

A document within a scholarly project or information database:
(MLA 4.9.2b)

Bridis, Ted. "COPA Ruling Expected: FTC Weighs How to Protect Kids Online." ABCNEWS.com. 20 Oct. 1999.
ABC News Internet Ventures. 20 Oct. 1999.
<<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/tech/DailyNews/netprivacy991020.html>>.

A personal or professional site: (MLA 4.9.2c)

Writing Across the Curriculum Home Page. 9 Sept. 1999.
Writing Across the Curriculum Program, Wright State U. 20 Oct. 1999. <<http://www.wright.edu/academics/wac/index.html>>.

To cite an article in an online periodical (a scholarly journal, newspaper, or magazine) include the following elements:

(MLA 4.9.4)

1. Author's name
2. Title of the article
3. Name of the periodical
4. Number of the volume or issue
5. Publication date
6. Range or number of pages (or paragraphs)
7. Date of access
8. URL (in angle brackets)

An online journal article:

Phelan, James. "Conferencing: Publication and Conferring."
PRE/TEXT: Electra(Lite) 1.1 (1997): 7 pp. 22 Oct. 1999
 <<http://wwwpub.utdallas.edu/~atrue/PRETEXT/PT1.1/PT1PHELAN.html>>.

An article in a newspaper:

Goldberg, Carey. "Boston Launches an Anti-Cancer Campaign."
New York Times on the Web 2 Nov. 1999. 3 Nov. 1999
 <<http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/science/health/110299hth-boston-cancer.html>>.

An article in a magazine:

Stone, Amey. "This Product Test Was Conclusive--Or Was It?"
Businessweek Online 2 Nov. 1999. 3 Nov. 1999
 <<http://www.businessweek.com/today.htm>>.

E-mail:

Jones, Samantha. "Preview of This Week's Agenda." E-mail
 to Shirley Smith. 8 Jan. 1997.

For more information and guidelines for citing electronic sources, consult MLA's site <http://www.mla.org/set_stl.htm>.

Titles (MLA 2.6.1-2.6.6)

Underlined:

Underline titles of works that have been or could be published independently.

- * Books
- * Periodicals (journals, magazines, newspapers)
- * Films or movies
- * Plays
- * Albums
- * Radio or television programs (not individual episodes)

Books previously published independently and reprinted in a collection should still be underlined. See MLA 2.6.2 for more examples.

In Quotations:

Enclose in quotation marks titles that are part of a larger work. See MLA 2.6.3 for more examples.

- * Chapters of books
- * Articles in periodicals
- * Poems (except long poems published as individual works)
- * Short stories
- * Single radio or television episodes

Abbreviations (MLA 6.1-6.7.4)

Abbreviations are common in works cited lists and in tables. They are seldom used in the body text of a paper. Abbreviations are common for time (6.2), geographic locations (6.3), scholarly designations (6.4), and publishers' names (6.5).

Publishers' names in a works cited list:

Some guidelines for abbreviating publishers' names in a works cited list are as follows:

- 1) Omit articles
- 2) Use surnames only and omit first names and initials
- 3) Use capitalized abbreviations common in the field (e.g. MLA, APA, CBE)
- 4) Shorten "University" to "U" and "Press" to "P" (e.g. U of Chicago P)

Numbers (MLA 2.5.2)

Do not use numerals to begin a sentence. You may spell out numbers which have only one or two words (one, two hundred, twelve thousand). Use numerals for others (4 1/2, 305, 12,375).

Inclusive: (MLA 2.5.6)

For numbers less than one hundred, give both numbers in a range (e.g. 6-8, 35-50, 75-99).

For values over one hundred, you may include only the last two digits of the second number if more are not required (e.g. 1025-29, 4005-09, but 65-125, 4018-4125).

When giving a range of years, include both numbers in full unless they fall within the same century (e.g. 1789-93, but 1865-1924).

Spaces After Periods

The following is an excerpt from a question and response posted on the "Frequently Asked Questions" section of the MLA web site. You can get more information by visiting <<http://www.mla.org>>.

"How many spaces should I leave after a period or other concluding mark of punctuation?"

"Because it is increasingly common for papers and manuscripts to be prepared this way [with a single space after concluding punctuation marks, as they would appear if published], a single space is shown after all punctuation in the examples in the MLA Handbook and the forthcoming second edition of the MLA Style Manual [not the MLA Handbook]. As a practical matter, however, there is nothing wrong with using two spaces after concluding punctuation marks unless an instructor or editor requests that you do otherwise."

Laura J. Baker

Professor Tessdale

English 250

14 February 1999

The Paradoxes of Virginia Woolf

As Virginia Woolf saw it, "every secret of a writer's soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind, is written large in his works" (Gordon 6).

When a subject is highly controversial—and any question of sex is that—one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold. One can only give one's audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the speaker. (Woolf 55)

Virginia Woolf tells what other writers only show. "Personal beliefs and experiences can be traced throughout the works of major writers," but nowhere quite so easily as within the works of Virginia Woolf (60).

To Virginia, the younger daughter of Leslie Stephen, and her heroines, death appears to be the "final outcome of marriage" (Harper 258). Even though Stephen deeply loved his wife, as revealed in his correspondence, he was a self-indulgent man who often overlooked her needs. He went off on numerous vacations, leaving Julia with all eight children. "I like to think of you with the ragamice," he wrote from Cornwall. "They must be delightful" (Gordon 24).

Works Cited

- American Psychological Association. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 4th. ed. Washington: APA, 1994.
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- Carroll, James. "An American Requiem." The Atlantic Monthly Apr. 1996: 76-88.
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- Walter, Natasha. "Newfoundland Kisses." Rev. of The Shipping News, by E. Annie Proulx. The Times Literary Supplement 26 Nov. 1993: 22.